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HOW THE AUTO WORKERS WON



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Published by THE DAILY WORKER
35 East 12th Street
New York, N. Y.

FULL STEAM AHEAD! UNIONIZE ALL AUTO SHOPS!

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER
Chairman, Communist Party, U.S.A.

In the fight to organize the army of workers in the mass production industries the C.I.O. has won the first round. The settlement of the auto strikers undoubtedly constitutes a substantial victory for the workers. Despite its youth and weakness, the union has made a break in the fortifications of the open shop and thus laid a basis of the struggles that are yet to come before the auto industry is fully organized.

The aim of the bosses and their newspapers in playing down the importance of this strike victory is clear; they want to sow confusion among the workers and thus prevent the unions' growth. It is not surprising that William Green of the A. F. of L. Executive Council is following the same line. During the strike his role was that of breaking the strike and now he goes along the same road by trying to rob the Auto Workers Union, the C.I.O., and John L. Lewis, of the victory.

The auto strike is fated to play a very important part in American labor history. It is the sign of the new era that is dawning in the trade union movement in this country. It is the beginning of the end of the horse-and-buggy form of craft unions so dear to the hearts of Mr. Green and the employers.

The cue for the Auto Workers' Union is to consolidate its victory by organizing the masses of workers in the auto industry and also by stimulating the organizing campaign in steel. Full steam ahead to the unionization of the great auto plants.

This article first appeared in the Daily Worker, Feb. 13, 1937.

G. M. OPEN SHOP HEART HAS BEEN PIERCED

By WILLIAM WEINSTONE

Secretary, Michigan Communist Party

FLINT, Mich., Feb. 11.—The C.I.O. policy of militant industrial unionism has triumphed today. Armed with the sit-down as a weapon, backed and supported by great masses, infused with a flaming courage and fiery determination, the G. M. workers have blasted an opening in the open shop wall surrounding the auto industry.

Not everything has as yet been gained. The economic demands are still to be met. The industry is still to be organized in the majority of plants. But the heart of the G. M. open shop—Flint—has been pierced, and the conditions created for wresting a better livelihood from the greedy grip of General Motors.

The auto workers smashed the injunction, withstood and repulsed the violence and provocations of the G. M. Corporation and left the plants of their own will only when their terms had been met. They have placed upon the labor movement their own indelible mark of militancy, firmness and determination which will affect profoundly the coming struggles in other auto plants in steel and coal.

The auto workers have cleared the way to planting the flag of unionism over the giant factories of this country. History will record with pride that the auto workers, and above all the workers of Flint, struck the blow which shattered the shackles of open shop tyranny.

This article first appeared in the Daily Worker, Feb. 12, 1937.

THAT IS WHY THEY WON

AN EDITORIAL FROM THE DAILY WORKER

February, 13, 1937

1. A SIGNIFICANT VICTORY

Joy reigns through the automobile centers this morning, and with good reason.

After days and nights of heroic battle, the auto strikers have gained a significant victory.

We greet the settlement as one that drives a big wedge into the Open Shop, which has kept so many thousands of American workers in bondage.

That settlement—wrung from the powerful and unscrupulous General Motors Corporation—is a tribute to the flaming courage of the sit-down strikers at Flint. It is a tribute to the determination of the Committee for Industrial Organization and its leader, John L. Lewis, to organize the mass production industries. It is a triumph for the policy of militant industrial unionism.

Under the agreement made and the supplementary letter which is part of it, the United Automobile Workers International has won:

Sole collective bargaining rights, for at least six months, in the seventeen struck plants of the General Motors Corporation.

Recognition as collective bargaining agency for the union members in the other 52 plants of the corporation.

The guarantee that there will be no discrimination because of union membership or because of participation in the strike.

The agreement that collective bargaining on hours, wages, limitation of the speed-up, former discrimination and other conditions of work—covered in the union's letter of Jan. 4—will begin between the United Automobile Workers and the corporation on Feb. 16.

The dismissal of the injunctions in Flint, Mich., and Cleveland, Ohio.

The union members to have full and free leeway to extend the scope of their organization, through the winning of new members.

These terms, vigorously enforced from today on by the union, will open the way for the definite and complete organization of all General Motors plants. They bring courage to all automobile workers. They pave the way for the triumph of unionism throughout the industry.

The hurried "granting" of a 10 per cent wage increase by the Chrysler Corporation is an indication of the deep reverberation of the General Motors battle.

The chief citadel of the G. M. Open Shop—Flint—"has been pierced," declared William Weinstone, secretary of the Michigan Communist Party yesterday, "and the conditions created for wresting a better livelihood from the greedy grip of General Motors."

During the six months of exclusive collective bargaining in the seventeen struck plants, the United Automobile Workers International Union, by the same alert and aggressive policy which characterized the strike, can establish its roots beyond destruction in the industry.

When the sit-down strikers left the plants yesterday, under this agreement, they left voluntarily. They marched out to the applause and jubilation of their fellow-workers. They came out like a conquering army, of their own free will, in spite of two sweeping injunctions against them. They have shown, by their heroic solidarity for the 44 days of the sit-down, the path that other workers can take in the basic industries—to win union recognition on an industrial basis and the union conditions which go with such recognition.

There is good cause, then, for the jubilation which is taking place today among the thousands of workers of the general Motors Corporation.

For even broader reasons, this victory has a deep significance. It represents the first time in American labor history that a central organization of the trade unions entered directly into the fight of an affiliated organization and became a decisive force in the struggle.

The C.I.O. stands out, in the auto strike, in splendid contrast to the past record of the American Federation of Labor. The A. F. of L. leadership has shamelessly allowed, as a matter of custom, local unions and individual national unions to carry on their battles alone. The center has never directly participated in the battle.

The C.I.O., in the General Motors struggle, followed an entirely different course of action. It threw its full resources into the fight. The chairman of the C.I.O., John L. Lewis, joined with Wyndham Mortimer, vice-president of the union, in the

working out of the final settlement. For days, first with President Homer Martin and then with Mortimer, Lewis fought for the rights of the auto workers against the giant corporation.

What has taken place in the General Motors battle represents a distinct triumph for industrial unionism.

The colossal struggle within the A. F. of L. during the past two years, has centered around this question of industrial unionism. The craft union policies of the reactionary leadership of the A. F. of L. have proved impotent to organize America's 35,000,000 unorganized workers. They have made not the smallest headway in the giant trustified industries through their policy of selling unionism to the employers and not to the workers, and through their division of the workers into small, warring craft unions.

And yet, these reactionary A. F. of L. leaders have fought tooth and nail against industrial unionism, resorting even to the "suspension" of the C.I.O. unions rather than admit the effectiveness of this principle of action.

Now, we have had the first big test of the value of industrial unionism in the mass production industries. In that test, this form of organization has shown beyond all doubt its smashing value to the workers in the mass production industries. They have not stood, divided, before the united and powerful forces of the General Motors Corporation. They have acted as one man through the United Automobile Workers—and that has been the source of their great strength against such great odds and such powerful enemies.

Out of Flint and the other auto centers comes clearly this message: *"It is through industrial unionism alone that the mass production workers can win freedom from the yoke of the open shop."*

The Worker's Cry of Freedom

The Women's Auxiliary Theme Song

(Tune: Marching Thru Georgia)

The men are in the factories sitting in a
strike we know
Holding down production so that we can
get more dough,
The Union's organizing, and we'll see that
it is so,
Shouting the Union forever!

Chorus:

Hurrah, Hurrah, The Union makes us
free
Hurrah, Hurrah, It's all for you and me
Organize your brothers and we'll win
the fight you'll see
Shouting the Union forever!

—2—

The women got together and they formed
a mighty throng
Every worker's wife, and mom and sister
will belong



Negotiate Hell, Start the Works—Sloan

By Burck

Bullets—G. M. Dividends for the Workers

By Ellis



News Item:—New York, Feb. 2—General Motors yesterday declared dividends of 25 cents a share on common stock and the regular quarterly dividend of \$1.25 on preferred—and shot down nine of its Chevrolet workers in Flint.

We Had a Hot Time in the Old Town Last Night

(Tune: There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight)

I

Cheer, boys, cheer,
For we are full of fun;
Cheer, boys, cheer,
Old Parker's on the run;
We had a fight last nite
And I tell you, boys, we won.
We had a hot time in the old town
last nite.

II

Tear gas bombs
Were flying thick and fast;
The lousy police,
They knew they couldn't last.
Because in all their lives they never ran
so fast,
As in that hot time in this old town last
nite.

III

The police are sick
Their bodies they are sore
I'll bet they'll never
Fight us any more;
Because they learned last nite
That we had quite a corps,
We had a hot time in the old town
last nite.

IV

Now this scrap is o'er;
The boys are sticking fast
We'll hold our grounds
And fight here to the last
And when this strike is o'er
We'll have our contract fast,
We'll have a hot time in the old town
that nite!

They will fight beside the men to help the
cause along
Shouting the Union forever!

—3—

Homer Martin is the leader of this mighty
band,
And we'll stand behind him for the future
of the land;
We won't give up the battle 'till we get
our just demands
Shouting the Union forever!

—4—

When the battle's over and we're back
to work once more,
There will not be a single scab inside the
factory door;
The men will wear their buttons and the
bosses won't get sore
Shouting the Union forever!



Talking Through His Hat

By Burck

(Reprinted from the United Automobile Worker)

II. HOW WAS THE VICTORY WON?

How was such a significant victory won by the automobile workers? The reactionary Liberty League press of the country and the General Motors Corporation try hard to minimize the victory. The Tory press does this in its editorials and also in its news columns. On Thursday night the *New York Sun*, a chief organ of the Liberty League, ran these headlines: "Union to bargain for members only; Green charges surrender by Lewis."

This headline, false through and through, indicates what these reactionaries are up to. They fear the effect of the automobile victory on the workers in the other mass production industries—in steel, rubber, textiles and the like.

William Green comes forward, also, to join in the chorus of the reactionary press. At every stage of the fight, Green has given aid and comfort to the General Motors Corporation. When that corporation said, "Everybody must bargain with us," as a cheap means of preventing bargaining by the sole organization of the workers, the United Automobile Workers, Green likewise echoes: "Everybody must bargain with General Motors." Now, the reactionary press tries to give the impression that exclusive bargaining rights have not been won for the 17 struck plants. Green in typical Man Friday fashion, also cries out: "The Automobile Workers have surrendered the right to exclusive collective bargaining in the struck plants."

Such a statement is absolutely false. The United Automobile Workers Union, instead of "surrendering" exclusive bargaining rights, has begun to establish these rights for the first time in the auto industry. That is in sharp contrast to the methods of Green and Co., who had miserably failed for years to establish anything at all in the automobile industry.

Why does Green engage in such false statements? Not only in order to weaken the C.I.O. by such unfounded and strikebreaking assertions. He wants also an open hand to aid the big trustified corporations in the future, in strike-breaking ventures.

The liberal capitalist press has another version as to how the victory was won. They realize its significance. They greet it as such. And then, they give the credit for its outcome to President Roosevelt.

The *New York Post* is a case in point. It declares that to

Roosevelt is "due the lasting honor and respect of all parties." To that it adds: "In this particular strike it was Roosevelt who applied pressure, remote but none the less effective, for the present settlement."

That is, likewise, an incorrect assertion. Roosevelt's criticism of John L. Lewis gave distinct support to the General Motors Corporation at a critical moment in the strike. Had Roosevelt's plan of settlement been accepted by the C.I.O. or the workers, it would have been seriously injurious to the strikers and helpful to the corporation.

All of these "explanations" of the capitalist press are efforts to obscure the real reason for the victory, which came out of the solidarity and the intelligent tactics of the workers themselves, encouraged by their union and the C.I.O. leadership.

The outcome of the General Motors battle is due, from first to last, to the new and progressive trade union policies and tactics used by the workers in that fight.

The workers themselves devised the tactic of the sit-down. It grew out of their mass production experience. They organized it carefully and carried it through with that discipline and determination which made for its success. It proved to be a tactic which can be particularly effective for workers on the Belt. *That is why they won.*

The workers did not only remain in the plants but held their positions in spite of police, injunctions and the National Guard. They began definitely to develop class struggle tactics, in place of the old A. F. of L. tactics of class collaboration. *That is why they won.*

From the outset, the strike took on a highly political character. The General Motors Corporation was in complete control of the local agencies of government. It called upon the courts under its control to issue sweeping injunctions against the strikes—two in Flint and one in Cleveland, Ohio. It called upon the police forces, controlled by its henchmen in the city governments, to attack the strikers. The solidarity of the workers was so great, in the face of this campaign of force and violence, and the support so widespread, that the corporation could not apply the injunctions it had received. The workers openly defied these injunctions. *That is why they won.*

The United Automobile Workers, the city central bodies in the auto areas and unions in many other places supported the sit-down strikers and gave them militant cooperation. The auto union leadership encouraged the sit-down strikers to "hold the fort," giving them strength through the organized mass picket

lines of their fellow-workers and through delegations from other cities. *That is also why the workers won.*

Such militant and progressive attitudes are in distinct contrast to the defeatist and reactionary policy of the A. F. of L. leadership, toward this battle and toward the struggles of the auto workers in the past.

The role of the A. F. of L. leadership, in the General Motors battle, was a strikebreaking one from the beginning of the strike. That fact stands out definitely and decisively.

Early in the strike, President John P. Frey of the Metal Trades Department, continued his role of "prosecutor" of the C.I.O. by writing a letter to the General Motors Corporation, with a view of giving them aid and comfort. With a life-or-death struggle on in the General Motors plants, Frey outrageously stabbed the sit-down strikers in the back by declaring that men connected with the building trades and metal trades departments of the A. F. of L. would not join the strike and were satisfied with their conditions of employment at General Motors. In this declaration he was joined by President Arthur Wharton of the Machinists and President J. W. Williams of the Building Trades Department, stooge for William L. Hutcheson of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners.

This was a strikebreaking move, pure and simple. These A. F. of L. leaders had not men worth mentioning in their unions from the General Motors plants. They had never been able to organize them successfully and had shown no inclination toward doing so.

Later, Secretary Morrison granted an interview to the Liberty League organ, the *New York Sun*, declaring that the United Automobile Workers are an "outlaw" union and indicating that the strike should be defeated. Frey continued his attacks upon the strikers, dubbing the sit-down tactic as "Moscow made."

Finally, President William Green shamelessly tried to weaken the effectiveness of the General Motors settlement by his strained misinterpretation of what the agreement calls for.

At every step, the A. F. of L. leadership sought to smash the strike rather than to rally the trade unions to its support for the insurance of victory. The auto workers rejected all these strikebreaking efforts of the A. F. of L. leadership—fruit of the bankruptcy class collaboration policies. The auto workers persisted, instead, in pursuing the new policies and tactics of struggle. *That is why they won.*

III. THE TASK AHEAD

When we look at the forces in this General Motors battle, we can appreciate what the outcome signifies to labor.

Here was a new union, which had not yet completed its organizational plans. Overnight it found itself forced into a bitter strike by the General Motors Corporation. Despite that partial preparedness, the United Automobile Workers was successful in planting itself in the industry.

The nature of the victory can be further appreciated when we consider the nature of the General Motors Corporation. This creation of the Morgan-du Pont interests is one of the very chief citadels of the Rulers of America, the great finance capitalists. It stands out above all other corporations in the automobile industry, with more assets than its three largest rivals put together. It is interlinked with the Steel Trust, the Rubber Trust and the other dominant combinations under the control of the House of Morgan and of the death-dealing family of du Pont.

The auto workers have been thus engaged in battle with the most powerful and vicious industrial enterprise in the entire world, with profits exceeding those of the United States Steel Corporation.

The extent of the victory will depend upon the follow-up which the United Automobile Workers carries through—to insure that the settlement becomes the sounding board for a great organizational drive in the industry. The union is called upon to be on guard day and night, with the same vigilance and persistence that was maintained in the battle.

The United Automobile Workers will be required to rally all its forces to the immediate building and broadening of the union. It will not be a matter of surprise if such an unscrupulous outfit as the General Motors Corporation will not seek, by chicanery and fraud, to injure the union and to break the conditions of the settlement. The chief safeguard against such schemes is the immediate strengthening of the union, in every plant of the General Motors Corporation.

It is essential, also, that the union show the greatest concern and greatest determination in the winning of substantial gains

in the further negotiations, about to open. The company has "granted" a 5 cents per hour increase in wages, as a result of the strike. It has hastened to do this, in order to weaken the union. It will seek in every way, to prevent further gains from being made for the workers. It will try to continue the discriminations against the active unionists who were discharged in the past. Against such attempts the union is certainly called upon to fight to the finish—in order that the settlement gained may result in immediate concrete benefits in the lives and homes of the auto workers.

The General Motors battle has not only been for the welfare of the auto workers. It has been watched with eagerness by the steel workers, preparing for a show-down with the powerful Steel Trust over the same issues of unionism and improved conditions. The outcome to date will give courage to these steel workers. It should serve to spur on the great steel union drive, in order that the Steel Trust may be compelled to deal with its union employes as the Auto Trust has been made to do. It will give great impetus to the great struggles ahead for the coal miners, also facing the Coal-Steel Trust.

What has occurred in the General Motors battle should serve to advance the unity of the American labor movement, so urgently needed at this crucial hour. The victory of the auto workers will serve to speed the organization of thousands of unorganized workers in the auto centers into the craft unions. The continued struggle in automobiles and the giant battles about to take place in the giant steel industry, in the coal fields and in other basic industries deserves the wholehearted support and cooperation of the trade unions everywhere.

Let the unions express their appreciation of the heroic struggle put up by the auto strikers! Let them rally to their aid and to that of the other mass production workers. Let them speak out and declare that in a united labor movement, on the basis of industrial unionism for the mass production industries, lies the road to progress and victory for the American workers.

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